1 Tim.4:10, 7-10. Exercise thyself unto godliness; godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the savior o of all men, especially of them that believe.

THE COMING OF THE CHRIST-A PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS.

Intro, CHRISTMAS, HISTORIC AND LEGENDARY.

I. Christmas, a Xn festival in celebration of the birth of Christ.

1. Originally cele. by Eastern Church as Epiphania, Jan.6th. By Western Church as Natalis, Dec.25th.

2. Pagan Festivals at winter solstice the birthday of the new sun about to return once more to the earth. Connected with civil and social life of the Romans.

The transition from the pagan t to the Xn point of view readily made- Jesus the sun of the spiritual world come to earth. Hence Xns fixed Dec.25th as the date to celebrate the Savior's birth, for the purpose of drawing away Xn people from heathen festivities, and of purifying eventually these heathen customs and ∫ ideas.

In the 4th Cent. the Eastern Ch. adopted the same date- Dec.25th. and Xmas became one of the 3 great annual church festivals.

2.

3. Telesphorus, 7th Bishop of Rome, the first to celebrate the birth of X. And suffered martyrdom for it. He died, but not his observance!

In the reign of Diocletian, about 200 yrs after Telesphorus, a vast number of)ns assembled to celebrate the birth of their Savior, were burned to death by order of the pagan emperor.

4. The legend of St. Boniface and the first Xmas tree.

The pagan tribes of Germany offering up human lives to God Thor. Scene: Dark of night on hill top. Fire burning at base of sacred Oak Tree, sparks flying upward thru the branches and leaves. Priest before fire offering up a live boy in sacrifice to God Thor. (y

Then comes Boniface, the missionar who stays the blow of the priests hammer, turning it aside by the Cross rescues the boy, fells the oak and tells the story of Jesus and how God wants us to give up sin, not human life.

"And here,' cried Boniface, pointing to a young fir tree, standing straight and green, with its top pointing toward the stars, "here is the living tree, with no stain of blood upon it, that shall be the sign of your new worship. See how it points to the sky. Let us call it the tree of the Christ Child. Take it up and carry it to the chieftains hall, for this is the birth night of the white Christ. You shall go no more into the shadowns of the forest to keep your feasts with secret rites of shame. You shall keep them at home with laughter and song and rites of love."

Thus did the pagan oak, whose roots were fed with blood, fall before the fir tree which points to the stars.

II. Christ in the genealogies.

1. Where was X before he was born? With the Father, yes, but did X come suddenly from God and jump into His humanity? If so, what is the significance of the geanalogies?

The geanalogies teach us the X came from God thru humanity&

The ancestry of Jesus not confined to the blood of the Jews, the chosen of God, but the blood of gentiles flowed thru him also. ~~And Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar~~ Rahab and Ruth were both gentiles.

Jesus was not born in sin, but he was born thru sinful ancestors. The sinful begetting of Judah and Tamar did not exclude their children Peres and Zera from becoming the ance ancestors of the Christ. Rahab the harlot begat Boaz-both ancestors of Jesus. And there is the sinful Bath-sheba, another ancestor. And even David the beloved King was za sinful man.

Jesus, then, was born from a common humanity, however selected his ancestry- the blood of many trib mongled in His ~~blee~~ veins.

Jesus, then, was born thru a sinful humanity. He was a man of the human race- the Son of Man".

II. The Divine Christ in us the hope of Glory.

1 Col. 1:27 to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

1. Christ was coming thru all the tribes and ages until He was born in Bethlehem, Judah.

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2. Tho already born and having alread lived on earth we are still lookin g for His coming.

Not because of some speculative

belief as to His second coming, but since the measure of Christ within us depends upon our capacity to receive and understand and exemplify Him, the consciousness of our own limitations and imperfections causes us to to look forward to our being able to receive Christ in still greater measure, yea , to the time when we shall be able to have Him in all fulness of being!
"To this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the savior of all men, especially of them that believe."

The birth of Jesus Christ awakeneed in the soul of believing man a consciousness of the presence of God, the resurrection of Christ from the dead both quickens our hope and assures us of immortality of our being; His life teaches us how we may exercise ourselves unto godliness untillour capacity to receive Him fully is fully developed.

Christmas teaches us that God is with us, yea, within us, urging us and helping us to work out our own salvation.

Illustration: Years ago people living near Niagara Falls discovered a clinging to a rock near the American Falls

There he clung to the slippery rock 60 yards below. "Poor fellow, he's done for". Then the question, "Can we save him?" The rope ladder let down. Caught on some bushes . Who will volunteer to go down to the bushes and loosen the ladder. The young volunteer.

He climbed to the bushes and released the ladder, but the man on the rock could not take hold. Then he lowered himself slowly down, swinging from side to sideuntil he stood on the rock. The the slow climb of the man. Finally reaches.

Jesus, the Christ, is God come down to save us, to lift us up. But he does even more. He gives us of His own strength with which to save ourselves. He tells us just where to go and just what to do.

Jesus is God, Jesus is man: He is wrapped up in our humanity. Let us, then, exercise ourselves unto godliness, thereby hastening the coming of the Christ in the fulness of measure for us. the coming of heaven to earth, the coming of all goodness and love